

Junior Secondary Poetry

Judge's Report – Alicia Sometimes

2020 has been a time of uncertainty. This was reflected in the narratives within the submissions. Poems about isolation, fragility and Covid-19 were large in numbers but also many more were about hope, spirituality, faith, overcoming societal restraints and the love of family and home. Reading through these submissions I am comforted by the many stirring lines, the vivid analogies, the twists of phrases and the originality of the pieces. It is always difficult to choose a winner and even more heart-breaking when beloved poems only miss out by the slenderest of margins. It was a pleasure to read all the entries and marinate in all the pages of poetry. Emily Dickinson wrote, 'If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.' Congratulations to all the poets who entered the My Brother Jack Awards this year and high praise (and virtual confetti) to those incredible writers who won.

Winner: *A Thing of Beauty*

John Keats comes to mind immediately with the first line of his poem *Endymion*: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever...' Keats was basing his poem on a Greek myth that tells the story of a young sleepy shepherd who is loved by the goddess of the moon. Here the poet turns their attention to the power and sway of being an avid reader. The moon becomes the book and the poet has fallen in love with world of words and possibilities before them. This poem is visceral as we sit beside the writer as they read. Words are indeed a thing of beauty.

Highly Commended: *Words and And Then...*

Junior Secondary Poetry– *First Prize*

A Thing of Beauty

by Ruby Arnheim

I stare at the black ink that holds so much power.

I embrace the familiar smell of the musky pages, that have turned yellow with time.

I relax into my unmade bed

As I explore a world so different from my own.

I find myself devoted to the lives of people who have no knowledge of my existence.

Today's world, unbeknownst to these innocent characters.

I turn the weathered pages, eagerly awaiting each new sentence.

My eyes slowly scan each word, taking in all the magic from this one little book.

The last rays of sun stream onto the pages as the night falls.

I take one last glance at the black ink that holds so much power.

Junior Secondary Poetry– *Highly Commended*

Words

by Maggie Roberts

They envelop me,

Seeping through my pores.

I am somehow floating yet plunging further.

My eyes are closed. A failed attempt at preventing the pain.

And then I am submerged.

The world is silenced and still

The last few bubbles escape my mouth,

A final weak cry for help.

Like an ocean, I am pulled deeper

Until there is nothing between me and the words.

Junior Secondary Poetry – *Highly Commended*

And Then...

by Jolene Zheng

And then...

And then daylight flooded my room,

And then the smell of cookies made me hungry,

And then listening to people complain got annoying,

And then the stranger smiled at me behind his mask,

And then listening to music made me dance,

And then sleep was full of happy dreams,

And then I got a letter in the mail,

And then laughing so hard it hurt,

And then we could go back to school,

And then I could hug my friends